

Using CLASS for Quality Improvement: Supports for Head Start Programs

Allyson Dean: Hi, everyone. Welcome to our webinar, "Using CLASS for Quality Improvement: Supports for Head Start Programs." We're so excited you're here today. We're going to talk a little bit about some supports and some resources we have for your focus on quality improvement in your programs. So, let's go ahead and get started by introducing our presenters today. Amanda, you want to kick us off?

Amanda Bryans: Well, thank you, Allyson. My name is Amanda Bryans, and I work in the Office of Head Start, and my role really is overseeing child development, education services, and research to practice. I've worked with Head Start for a little bit over 30 years now, including 10 years in a local program, and 20 years in the Office of Head Start. Lindsey, you're up.

Lindsey Hutchison: Hi, everyone. My name is Lindsey Hutchison, and I also work in the Office of Head Start. I am a senior policy analyst on our policy team, and I'm really excited to be here with you all this afternoon, and I'm going to turn it now over to Jamie.

Jamie Sheehan: Hi, everyone, Jamie Sheehan, also with the Office of Head Start, and I oversee the National Center on Early Childhood Development Teaching and Learning, and so we are certainly happy to be here today.

Allyson: And I'm Allyson Dean. I'm the Director of Training and Resource Development at the National Center on Early Childhood Development Teaching and Learning and sort of your emcee for today's webinar. So, let's kick it off by going over what we're hoping to do today. We're going to talk, or Lindsey's going to talk us, through some information about how the Designation Renewal System is really the final rule that's really going to support your program to use CLASS for quality improvement. We're going to share some program-level strategies that we learned from a really exciting listening tour that we all were part of last year with nine highly effective grantees, and then we'll cap it off with sharing some resources that you can use to support your CQI efforts. But before we get into all of that, we have a fun message from Dr. B to kick us off. So, let's take a minute and listen to what she's got to say.

Deborah Bergeron: Hello, Head Start. Dr. B here. I'm so excited to be with you today. I'm actually just doing a short intro, and then I'm going to turn this webinar over to some amazing ladies. We have Lindsey, Amanda, Jamie, and Allyson who are queued up, ready to go to kind of give you a booster shot of CLASS details, especially in light of the new rule, and hopefully, by the end of this webinar, you'll feel kind of re-energized around CLASS, but I just wanted to get us started. You know, before we jump into the details of the webinar, I thought it might be nice to just talk about the history of all of this and how we kind of come to this place and why it's so important that we have this measure of teacher-child interactions. We know from research but also just from our own kind of knowledge base as teachers, as even parents, that that whole process of interacting with a child, that adult-to-child interaction, is key in the growth of any

child. So, within a Head Start classroom, we prioritize this as a way of building quality classroom instruction. We use CLASS as a means of measuring that, of course, but at the end of the day, it's really the focus on that teacher-child interaction that we want to really raise to the level of your attention and see what you can do to enrich this part of your classroom experience for your kiddos. I like to think of it as, for my own children who are now grown, but if they were younger, where would I want them to be in school? What kind of classroom did I want them to experience when they were 3, 4, 5 years old? And if we're honest with ourselves, it is those classrooms where the teachers are engaging children in conversation, in experiences, where they're asking questions, and they're waiting for children to answer and not, you know, putting a worksheet on the table and asking them to color in the lines. We know that, right? So, that whole process of interacting with the child is so important, and we use CLASS to measure that, and this webinar is going to kind of give you a nice update about all of that.

Just to kind of also raise to your attention, if you go through the last year, we've done quite a few things around this topic because this is so important to me, and it's not just important when kids are 3 or 4 years old. It's important when they're 13, 14, 15 too. This is something I spent a lot of time when I was leading K-12 environments, but last year, we did a webinar on this topic with DTL trying to kind of front-load that whole CLASS observation process. Then we followed that up with 15-minute suites. All of these things are still available, so please tap into them if there's something that you could think could help with any of your preservice, in-service, ongoing PD, especially for your newer teachers, and we did a listening tour. I asked for folks to identify – Give me nine programs that scored above a three-five on CLASS, and let's talk to them. What did they do differently? Can we learn from their best practices? And we did, and that helps to inform a lot of what you're going to hear today.

So, as we go into this webinar, I want you to kind of get your mindset focused on how important the teacher-child interaction is, and then, if we know that's important, then it's our job as leadership to figure out how to influence that through our teachers in the classroom. And I'll finish up with this simple but maybe not simple, depends on your program, sort of thought, and I've said this before. I think the key to all of this is to learn what you're going to learn today and more but then empower a site leader, someone in each of your sites who owns this responsibility and who is an example of great instruction can go into classrooms on a regular basis and provide teachers with feedback and who can set the standards high and then watch the teachers reach those standards. I think site leadership is really the key to raising the bar in this area and really any area, but particularly with instruction, and I think teachers are starving for that kind of constant feedback. They want to be really good at their jobs, but they have got to have someone coming in, giving them feedback, and then coming back in to see the growth and recognize it, and that's how you build really quality instruction throughout a program or throughout a building. You know, with the final rule having just come out, we think this is really important to pay attention to. So, I am now going to turn it over to the experts here. I hope you enjoy this webinar. Again, I'm going to turn it over to Lindsey and Amanda and Jamie and Allyson. Enjoy the webinar.

Allyson: That was great. It's always great to hear from Dr. B. I'm going to get us started by turning it over to my colleague, Lindsey, who's going to talk to us a little bit more about the DRS.

Lindsey: Thank you, Allyson. So, I'm really excited to talk to you all today a little bit about the Designation Renewal System final rule that was recently released, and hopefully, all of you listening today had a chance to listen to our rollout webinars on the final rule last week or a few weeks ago, and those are now posted on the ECLKC. If you haven't had the chance to view them, go ahead and view them, and hear our OHS leadership talk about the details of the final rule. So, that final rule was published on Friday, August 28th in the Federal Register, and you can, if you would like, go and read the entire final rule on the Federal Register, and the revised DRS conditions go into effect 60 days after publication. So, that means the effective date of the DRS final rule is October 27th of this year.

So, as I'm sure many of you know, there are seven conditions in the Designation Renewal System that could potentially trigger a grantee into competition. We only changed three of those conditions in this final rule, and it is those three that you see in red on this slide. So, we made changes to the deficiency condition, the CLASS condition, and the fiscal audit condition. So, I'm not going to speak today about deficiency or fiscal and audit. Again, you can go and view the other materials we've made available to hear more about those conditions. I really want to talk about the CLASS condition, the changes we made, in a little bit more detail before I turn it over to my colleagues to continue our presentation. So, what we have established in the DRS final rule is now two sets of thresholds for the CLASS condition. We have the competitive thresholds and the quality thresholds, and so, today, I'm going to focus most of what I say on the CLASS quality threshold, including why we developed these thresholds and now include them in the DRS, and how we really feel these thresholds present an opportunity for grantees.

But I do want to briefly touch on the class-competitive thresholds as well as a reminder for folks joining us today that may not have yet seen the webinars that describe the DRS final rule in more detail. So, as a reminder for folks, or if you haven't had the chance to hear this yet, if the grantee receives a score on a CLASS review that is below a competitive threshold in any class domain, this will trigger competition, but if a grantee receives a score on a CLASS review that is below a quality threshold in any CLASS domain, this will trigger Office of Head Start support for the grantee to implement quality improvement efforts, so that's really the distinction here between the competitive thresholds and the quality thresholds. If we could just go back one slide, please.

So, I will now say a bit more about each of the thresholds. So, the CLASS competitive thresholds, as you can see on your screen, are an emotional support score below a five, a classroom organization score below a five or an instructional support score below a 2.3 through July 31st, 2025, and then after that point, it will raise to a 2.5. So again, a score on a CLASS review as part of Office of Head Start monitoring below any of these thresholds that you see on your screen would trigger a grantee into competition. And then now, I want to talk a little bit more about the quality thresholds. So, the quality thresholds are really what we hope, in the

Office of Head Start, folks will really motivate our grantees to more often use CLASS as a tool for quality improvement, and the CLASS quality thresholds are a new part of the DRS. And for the Office of Head Start, these thresholds really represent where we would like all of our Head Start programs to be in terms of the quality of the classroom learning environment, and we really do believe all programs can get here, and Dr. Bergeron has talked about this in various speeches and presentations that she's given as well. That she really does believe, and we in the Office of Head Start believe, all programs can get here, and we want to continually have our programs striving to improve the quality of their classroom learning environments. So, as you can see on this slide here, the CLASS quality thresholds are a six for emotional support, a six for classroom organization, and a three for instructional support, and I do want to reiterate that the CLASS quality thresholds that you see here are not related to competition. So instead, if a grantee scores on a CLASS review, has a score below any of these quality thresholds, what that will do is lead to support – targeted support from the Office of Head Start, for the grantee to implement quality improvement efforts. So, let's discuss a little bit more about the prospects of the CLASS quality thresholds. So, as I've already alluded to, the quality thresholds for us really represent a shift to a growth mind-set in the Designation Renewal System. So, our goal with these thresholds is to really support grantees as you all strive for high-quality learning environments and continual improvement over time, and we really do want grantees to take advantage of this opportunity to re-examine your professional development and training and technical assistance systems with a particular focus on how you are supporting classroom education staff in the areas in which they have the most room for growth. So, rather than being focused on achieving a specific CLASS score, our goal with the CLASS quality thresholds is to motivate grantees to continually examine areas where support improvement is needed to promote stronger teacher-child interactions.

So, I mentioned previously that grantees that receive a CLASS score below any of the CLASS quality thresholds will receive T and TA support from the Office of Head Start. So, I know folks are probably wondering, "What does that mean to receive specific T and TA support from the Office of Head Start?" So, what this means, from our view, is that the Office of Head Start will proactively connect grantees with training and technical assistance resources that target those areas of teacher-child interactions in need of improvement, and I'm sure, as many folks that are joining us today know, there are numerous T and TA resources available on the ECLKC that target improving classroom learning environments. You'll hear a bit more about some of those things later in the presentation today as well, and this whole webinar is a great example of a T and TA resource that's available to you to help you think about quality improvement in this important area and how CLASS can be supportive of your goals around that. So, in addition, our national T and TA centers and our network of regional T and TA staff will support grantees through targeted efforts to improve classroom quality, which, of course, is an area they've already been focused on quite a bit prior to now, so they're going to continue that focus.

So, we in the Office of Head Start are very excited about these changes to the CLASS condition in the DRS, and we hope that our grantees are as well. So, in just a moment, I will turn the webinar over to our next presenters, but first, I do want to give one caveat, that like many of you joining us today, I have small children home full-time right now. They are currently

napping, so, I am balancing work and child care responsibilities, but you may see me pop in and out of the video or turn my camera off at times if one of them wakes up from their nap. So, now I'm really pleased to hand it over, the presentation, to Amanda, Allyson, and Jamie to share more information with you on promoting high-quality learning environments in Head Start.

Amanda: Well, thank you so much, Lindsey, and I have my own caveat. I have some not-so-small children at home with me this afternoon, and I can hear one of their voices in the background in spite of my urging them to not talk, but we are really so pleased to be able to be here with you, and I wanted to just add a little to what Lindsey said because I think a lot of the changes we made in the final rule really originated in the response we got in our notice to proposed rulemaking, and a lot of the programs who may be listening now should recognize some of the ideas that they submitted in what was in the final rule. The Office of Head Start takes that kind of input really seriously and worked very hard to incorporate it.

So, I have the opportunity to talk a little bit about what the quality thresholds look like in action. I think, like Allyson and Lindsey have alluded, when we read the dimensions, most programs tell us these are the things that they work for – for children and that they want. I also think we recognize that it can be challenging, especially instructional support. These often are areas that we didn't get a lot of background in ourselves when we went through higher education for early childhood education, so, it can feel new and unfamiliar, and I think that the resources and strategies that we're going to share today can help it become more familiar and comfortable as you all are continuing to work to implement these better interactions and practices. So, as I think Dr. Bergeron also said, effective teacher-child interactions really matter. Those relationships that teachers have with children and their support for children's development make a difference in shaping the very foundation of child learning, their approach to learning, and how they continue to develop. So, how do we know exactly what highly effective interactions that will meet the Designation Renewal System look like? Well, I think we can remind ourselves. We know that times are different now, so we'll be including some virtual teacher-child interaction examples throughout our presentation, and we also know that many of you have long histories of working in classrooms, in your own homes with young children, as well as through home-based programs, working with young children. And CLASS pre-K tool, the emotional support domain, measures how teachers' interactions support and help produce warm and positive relationships, and again, it's those positive relationships when children find trust and security that allow them to continue to develop and develop more relationships with peers and other adults. In classrooms with high levels of emotional support, like the six score in the DRS CLASS quality thresholds, we can observe the supportive relationships that are at the heart of the learning environment, and you see that children are comfortable and enjoy being with their teachers and their friends, and they also are able to follow the routines and meet the kind of expectations that are visible and well-established within the confines of that environment and those trusting relationships with adults.

So, there's noticeable interest in learning. Children and teachers are both excited about what's happening in the classroom or during a planned virtual learning experience. These are the cases

or situations where you see children coming either to the virtual classroom or the real classroom with ideas of their own and teachers listening to and including those ideas in the planned curriculum approach for the idea. You also see teachers really including their own ideas so that both children and adults can't wait to get there, whether it's, again, a screen or in-person activity. So, that setting, whether, again, it's physical or virtual, feels like a comfortable place to spend time and to enjoy being together. Children have some ownership and autonomy in the learning setting and activities that happen. And higher levels of emotional support, again, six or higher or even in the high fives, you see warm, supportive interactions, engaging learning environments, and those are the norm most of the time. Everybody may have an off minute or an off day, but most of the time, you see those warm, engaging, supportive learning environments. Children can make mistakes. Adults can make mistakes. People can acknowledge errors, and they can build and learn on what happens. It would be rare to not see these type of things happening in a classroom that's at a six or higher. The vast majority of the time, you see these warm, supportive relationships and interactions between children and adults, and again, the respect in regard for children's perspectives is kind of valued as equally as the respect in regard for adult perspectives. There are many indicators that a classroom is ... Sorry. Oh, there are many indications that the classroom is an emotionally supportive environment, that it's creating consistently positive experiences for children. The key difference when you're moving from mid-level to high-range in this domain is the frequency and consistency with which things are present, so it doesn't kind of matter whether you're entering at small-group time or at choice time. Children and adults are together and in these kinds of supportive, engaging environments. I think sometimes, one of the things that can lower emotional support a little is when adults are too disruptive or intervene and aren't as much able to include children's ideas. So, it's having the right balance of adult support and child initiative and leadership as well.

Jamie: Thanks, Amanda. I'm going to take it on for classroom organization. So, when classrooms meet the CLASS quality threshold of a six in classroom organization, like we just basically talked about in consistency, the whole classroom will look like a well-oiled machine for both children and for adults, and they'll know what's expected of them. Things, again, are consistent in these classrooms which helps everyone predict what's coming next, what their role is in the activity that's coming up. So, again, thinking about schedules and routines. Behavioral expectations are clear, and children understand why they're important and what their role is in meeting them. In classroom organization, learning expectations are also clear. Children and teachers both know the point of the learning activity. They're interested, they're engaged and can easily track their attention, and if attention fades, they're able to get them back on track. So, in doing that, teachers use a variety of approaches to keep children engaged such as offering interesting materials, fluctuating voice tones when useful, and having a variety of learning cues to help to keep children into re-engaging.

And just like we heard from Amanda in emotional support, when classrooms are in the high range of classroom organization, consistency is always the key. So, that doesn't mean that things are perfect. It doesn't mean that a teacher won't ever forget a needed item for an activity or that children won't get distracted during an in-person or a virtual circle time, but it does mean that when these interruptions happen, they're brief. The teachers have effective

strategies that they can redirect and get things back on track quickly, but what it really means is that there's no significant learning time that's lost for children as a result of these small disruptions, and that consistency, again, is the key. So, let me give you an example of what I'm thinking about. So, if I were you – we're observing in the classroom – things you might see in the mid-range level of classroom organization, you might see most children are engaged or interested, but maybe there's one or two or a few that aren't showing that much interest. So, they're lacking the interest. Sometimes, you'll see that behavioral expectations by the teacher are being reinforced, but you also see that they're not always being reinforced, so again, there's not always that consistency for children.

Now, what you might also see is that teachers are sometimes using a variety of interesting materials to support learning, but in other times, sometimes we fall back on what's comfortable, and we rely on those modes of learning that feel familiar, and so sometimes it's hard to challenge. I will also refer to myself as a teacher since I always – since I was. Sometimes, relying back on our modes of learning as teachers feels more comfortable. So, moving from the mid-range to the high range for what we're referring to in the CLASS quality threshold is, classrooms would ensure a consistent experience for all children. They would use a variety of interesting ways for teaching and learning to occur with different materials, different topics, different themes, and that children are typically actively engaged and interested in what's going on. So, those are the key things to be looking for as you're moving from mid-range to high range for a classroom organization.

Allyson: Thanks, Jamie, and then I'll round us out with instructional support, and of course, we all know that in instructional support, we're really talking about those interactions that promote problem-solving, reasoning and analysis, allow children to brainstorm and predict, and help children really persist with support until they get to that next level of understanding of concepts. And so, in the DRS final rule, the CLASS quality threshold moves from the high-low range firmly into the mid-range, and so, what that means is that in classrooms in the mid-range of instructional support, children in those classrooms are more likely to experience those things, as I said, opportunities to predict, teachers using why and how questions, and really extending the learning and introducing new and novel vocabulary to children and mapping that onto prior knowledge. So, those things will happen more often.

Some key things to think about if you're observing a classroom as an ED manager or someone providing support to teachers, this shift would be, for instance, a classroom in the low range, you're rarely going to see those things happen. You're more likely to see teachers using more directive language or asking questions that require just a simple yes or no answer. Towards the mid-range, occasionally or sometimes, you're going to hear those open-ended questions, that rich vocabulary. Children will be talking in social conversations and being engaged. So again, it's a little bit about frequency moving from rarely into sometimes or occasionally, that's sort of where the CLASS quality threshold lands for this particular domain. And the one thing I really want to talk about here just briefly is that when we're talking about supporting instructional interactions with children are dual-language learners, the first thing to remember is that dual-language learners need all of the same supports that we've just talked about. They need all the

same supports that other children need, those rich interactions. The difference is that as teachers, we may need to plan for those things. We may need to be a little bit more intentional about the types of supports and adaptations we put in place to make sure that children have these rich experiences in both their home language and in English. And so, that means you might just need to adapt some things.

So, let me give you a few examples, and I would just stress that these types of adaptations probably are going to happen best in small groups or even one-on-one, right? This is not something you do during morning meeting. But in smaller group or interaction, you might do some vocabulary bridging where you really explain a word using all of the things that children know about that concept in their home language while also connecting them with the new words in English. So, you're really building a bridge between the concepts that children already know from their home language and the new vocabulary word in English, or you might do language mapping, which is a beautiful strategy really measured by the CLASS in language modeling using that self and parallel talk to really map your actions and the child's actions to language in both English and the home language. So again, those are things that really, we want to do for all children, but it just takes a little bit of different planning.

And I will just make a quick plug for our "Front Porch" broadcast series this year which was ... We spent the year really dedicated to this topic of providing instructional supports for children who are dual-language learners, so I really suggest that you check that out. You can watch those on-demand. Those are those "Front Porch" broadcast series as well as the webinars that Lindsey was talking about earlier, again, can all be found on that resource list in your resource widget. So, I think, Amanda, Jamie, and Lindsey, we've got our first question. We've got lots of questions coming in, but this one has been asked a few times, so I'll lob it to you. People are asking: how do we do all of these rich and meaningful interactions with children if we are doing so from a distance, either, you know, augmenting face-to-face meetings with some hybrid learning at home or whether we're in a 100 percent virtual environment. What are some types you have for our audience today about how to make sure this happens in all settings? Amanda, you want to take that?

Amanda: Sure, Allyson. I think it's a great question, and it is not an easy question, so I don't want my answer to imply that I think this is an easy thing to do. I think it is hard both in person and, certainly, when you are connected via screen. I think that it's interesting. Dr. Bergeron recently did a virtual site visit with a program, and one of her comments afterward was, she realized she had to pause much longer to give children a chance to talk because if they speak, their face would appear on the screen, and she really wanted to see them, and it reminded me of in the virtual environment how important it is to have chances to have those kind of conversations where you still are asking open-ended questions. You're giving children a chance to respond. You want to have more than one back-and-forth with a child, and then the reality of other children may lose interest. Other children do not necessarily want to hear an extended conversation between one of their peers and the teacher.

So, how can you think about your planning so that you're incorporating one-on-one time and small-group time as well as maybe some larger group time even if everything is virtual? Or if you're able to blend some, maybe you can do some home visits outdoors with a child. You know, how can that time be used, again, to build the foundational relationship that will help each child continue to grow and learn even during what is a very daunting time? And the last thing I would say, Allyson, is just more than ever, we've always known that Head Start parents are deeply invested in their children's outcomes, and we often know that Head Start parents have many challenges – exceptional challenges – often, during this time, but calling on them and including them in some of the planning and ideas about this high level of child engagement and instructional support and, you know, giving them ideas around open-ended questions, more dialogue with children can really help build the quality that children are experiencing.

Jamie: And I would just add, also, using visual props. I know we've seen a lot of demonstrations of teachers doing some things in their virtual classrooms that incorporate these three things, right? So, they'll sometimes incorporate a book, then with a prop, and then that prop might be a novel word that's interesting. Then children are able to sort of engage with the novel word, try it out. Parents can also hear the novel word, or families can hear the novel word, and then doing, you know, some kind of search, being able to share amongst their friends. So, those are some of the strategies that I thought of.

Amanda: That's great, Jamie.

Allyson: Those are great, yeah! Great, thanks.

Amanda: I wanted to add, too, you can have a routine, even virtual. You can still build in a routine that kids can count in.

Allyson: Oh, that's so important. I love that. Yeah, like maybe starting off with the same song and ending with the same song or some other things like that. That's a great idea. I love that one. Okay, so how do we get there? Let's pivot a bit. Time is flying by, as I knew it would, and talk a little bit about resources and strategies. As Dr. B mentioned in her opening remarks, we were really privileged last year to talk to nine amazing grantees who are really focused on, you know, improving the quality of their teacher-child interactions as measured by the CLASS, and they embarked on significant quality improvement efforts to do that. So, these are not programs necessarily that started there, right? They had to work, particularly in the instructional support domain, to get to those higher thresholds. And so, we heard from them about what they did, and, really, the themes that emerged from those calls were strategies related to coaching and professional development, a heavy lean-in around curriculum, fortifying workplace conditions that supported their teaching staff, and, of course, strong instructional leadership, as we heard from Dr. B in her opening remarks that site leaders really having their eye on the prize was critical. And so, the first thing that was not a surprise, that I thought of when I thought about using CLASS for QI, was professional development and coaching, and, Jamie, I know that is a lifelong passion of yours, and I wonder if you want to share a little bit about what we learned.

Jamie: Oh, yeah. Thanks, Allyson. Yes, it was super rewarding to me to hear from those nine programs, all having such a strong common strategy. So, I know I mentioned I had been a former teacher but also a former Head Start ED manager and coach, so all of these things related to PD were so rewarding to me, and not a surprise, obviously. But some of the things that stood out to me was that using coaching and other professional development strategies in their programs were really what improved their effective teacher-child interactions. Really focusing in on what it meant to have supportive interactions in a preschool setting. So, not just hearing about it but really intentionally focusing on what it looks like. Also, making sure that the types of interactions and activities that children and staff are having deepen their understanding of their concepts and expanded their language skills.

So, going back to some of those novel words. Programs were also intentional about sharing what effective interactions look like, so using and sharing video and digital resources which is a great strategy, again, for being virtual, or maybe coaching or PD that's happening remotely, even if your staff are on-site. Maybe you have less adults in the classroom environment. So, being able to share those videos and digital resources of what high-quality effective interactions look like. Sharing them with groups of staff who might be in a community of practice. Sharing video clips of their classrooms or other video clips that they might come across. Sharing them with teachers' learning and collaborating groups or CoPs. And again, I really think that these ideas are so great right now when coaches and teachers might not be able to meet face-to-face. Using video of practices that teacher wants to see more of. Using these opportunities for professional development during staff meetings. Folks could watch them together. They could pair up. They could use video bridges to do that. Lots of great ideas came from these programs.

They also shared different approaches to sort of simplify the class language, and it gave staff more ownership when they came up with their own words about what certain things might mean for emotional support or classroom organization. It doesn't just mean that your classroom is organized, but it meant something to them when they changed sort of the lingo that they were using. It gave them a chance to understand how to apply and implement practices of CLASS versus just focusing on the CLASS scores. So, I think hearing those things from their program was super impactful, and then, I hope some of those strategies are helpful to our audience.

Allyson: For sure, yeah, and they really complement another finding or theme we heard, which is really job-embedded supports. Which is really all of the things you just talked about, but, really, to put it succinctly, taking new learnings, things we learn in training or in courses that we're taking, and having somebody on-site or virtually to support that first time we try to implement a new strategy or try something out. You know, one thing we have learned during the pandemic is the sort of huge interest in online learning. For those of you familiar with our Individualized Professional Development portfolio, the iPD, during the pandemic, we went from a little under 3,000 users to over 25,000 users, so people are really interested in embarking on online learning. And so, thinking about that job-embedded support on-site to help turn, you know, those sort of asynchronous courses into something that's alive in your practice is

something we heard about, and certainly makes sense to me. One thing that can really help you do that, I want to point out, is something called the Head Start Coaching Companion. Probably many of you are really familiar with it, but the Head Start Coaching Companion is an online video-sharing platform that allows coaches and coachees or supervisors and coachees to share a video clip. You can provide feedback within the video clip and point out key practices. You have the ability to work with multiple coachees in a group, and you have access to exemplar videos in this platform, which can really help bring those practices you're learning in a training or an online course in the iPD to life because you can see them, and within the Coaching Companion resource library, you can search for those video exemplars by domain, which is really a great professional development planning tool. So, if you have a staff member who's really struggling with classroom organization, you can search by domain and even dimension and get some support there for your coachee or the person you're mentoring.

Jamie: It's important to add, Allyson, these are all free resources on the –

Allyson: Yes, they are.

Jamie: That whole app – that whole application, whether on a desktop, is free to everyone.

Allyson: That's such a good point. I take that for granted so often, but it is free and publicly available, which is awesome. One of the more recent resources we've put in the Coaching Companion resource library are these video guides where you can read about a practice, observe it in action with a high-quality video clip, and then there are some activities and reflection questions. So, these are a great thing to use if you're creating action steps for people you coach. Or even if you just wanted to use something like this in reflective supervision., it would be a great tool for that purpose. Speaking of training, training was a huge topic in those listening calls, whether it was the regional TTA training they got through the OHSTA network, or their own ED managers coming in , or a local trainer to really train folks on the class. And not just teachers, but leadership, management, all aspects of the organization really understanding what a high-quality interaction looked like and why the program was so committed to it. That was really important. I wonder, Amanda, were you surprised at all by the heavy emphasis on training and having management staff participate?

Amanda: Yes and no. I think it was a great reminder of how critically important it is that leadership really have knowledge and buy-in around program change and that they're kind of participating as partners in it, not just sort of passing it on and expecting programs to implement without their commitment. So, that part was really incredible. And listening, Allyson, to both you and Jamie reminded me of being on those calls; how impressive it was, the kind of community that each of those programs created around implementing this high-quality teacher-child interaction. They really dedicated themselves, kind of program-wide, to the changes that they made, and it showed, I think, in their results. So, I think one thing is that in each case, the leaders, the directors, as well as other managers in the program really learned all about CLASS and thought about how some of the principles represented by the CLASS dimensions and domains were applicable to the various aspects of the program. I thought it is really, again, very smart for the leadership to think about the system of supports around a

classroom that is needed to enable teachers to kind of engage in this high level of quality interaction in a sustained way which, Allyson, you really helped us see that consistently ... The higher scorers, the higher performance; is not really so much about the scores, it's more about the high-quality experiences. Teachers need a lot of supports, and that we need to show that we value the educators and that we're going to focus on the interactions in this tool to continue to promote this really high quality which is about, to me ... This is what's fundamental. This is what gets me very excited. It's about children's curiosity and joy for learning, right?

Allyson: Mm-hmm.

Amanda: This is opening the world of opportunity to them. This is where they're beginning to get so excited because they suddenly realize a book can take them anywhere, that they can include their own ideas and expand an activity that was happening in the classroom, that they can be, the night before school, having a bath or something and think of something that they could do, and they know they can bring that idea and really make it happen. That's the kind of lifelong learning disposition that we can create or support. I think children already have these. It's a matter of supporting this disposition for learning so that it can sustain children and help them persist as they go on. I loved that many of the programs we talk to have strong partnerships and collaborations with their local education agencies and other schools. They were having conversations about these high-quality practices across settings, and I think we really heard that the basic understanding of the tool and the interactions people want for children and, ultimately, what people dream of for children can be supported by really working on the kind of discipline that it takes to sustain a lot of these features in a high-quality way. So, you know, it was really, again, so exciting to be part of those calls. I think that we are committed to supporting programs, and I think that programs are their best. They're the best teachers for each other, that one of the things we can continue to do is use MyPeers and other kind of learning communities to also support these sustained high-quality practices over time. It really ... This is about equity. This is about making this approach to learning and support for children available to all the children who come in through the doors of Head Start.

Allyson: Thanks, Amanda, and I think another thing that we heard, which kind of builds on what you're saying in terms of rich interactions and building curiosity and children's wonderment, is the heavy reliance on curriculum. So, those programs we heard from really, whether it was doing ongoing training, refresher training, or really leaning in and focusing on areas of the curriculum where teachers felt unsure, they really focused on that. They also had an ED manager or other program leader who front-loaded lesson plans for teachers. So, you know, they would review the lesson plans, write some notes, ideas about really extending the learning, maybe adding a different visual prop or using a different modality in teaching or their approach to the activity. They leaned in heavily on their curriculum, and I think that is so important now more than ever. I know a lot of the more common curriculum publishers that Head Start programs rely on have put out virtual or alternative versions of their curriculum so folks can lean on that, but even if your chosen curriculum hasn't done that, you know, really working with teachers ahead of time and helping them think through, "How do I get to that same learning objective in a different way?" is going to be critical right now. Teachers really

need to be supported to think about new ways of interacting virtually or even just to strengthen practice in physical classrooms. You know, what unit, what theme, what project is the most relevant to children coming back after being away for a while, or during what's been, you know, a difficult year? So, those sorts of things are really, places where program leaders can lean in and support teachers. And I think we heard some more of those practical strategies, right, Amanda, that were really things that programs are already doing and can just embellish a bit.

Amanda: Yeah, absolutely. I think that the work around critical thinking questions and how often, again, because our own experiences, if we went to preschool or early elementary or in higher education for early childhood. It's kind of absent, some of this idea that you ask children open-ended questions that you can't answer with a yes or no, and you really wait for them to answer those questions. One idea a couple of the programs actually talked to us about that we just thought was so implementable and could add quality right away is: put some little prompts around the room at teacher eye-level to help them remember, and if you're working on virtual, you can put them around your screen on little Post-It notes, just a reminder of the kinds of open-ended questions that you can periodically ask and then reminders, too, to wait. Let children have a chance to assemble their answers. And then I think I've talked about this a lot already, but each one of the programs we've talked to and other really high-quality programs that we've seen over the years really value children's ideas and input, and in one of those classrooms, the children really owned the classroom. They said that a child would meet you at the door and, you know, show you around their room, and they actually had kids help arrange, make decisions about room arrangement and their classroom schedule. So, they're still implementing a curriculum with a fidelity. There's a scope and sequence, but they've given children this role in helping kind of design what the room looks like. So, I think there are a lot of different ... It's not that everyone does the same thing. It's the idea that we're valuing children in a way that, again, really respects them as learners and includes their ideas.

Allyson: Absolutely, and I'll just do another brief plug for a resource here, which is our 15-minute in-service suites, which hopefully, you're all familiar with, but these are great professional development, really, toolkits that you can use. We did three specifically focused on curriculum this year which you could lean in and visit, and then, of course, all of ... We have several. We have a whole suite of these, really, and they are all cross walked with the class, pre-K, so, you can even choose specific in-service suites based on whatever domain or even dimension you're focused on. This is a really handy tool.

Jamie: This is my absolute favorite resource ever.

Allyson: I love it. I think it's so smart.

Jamie: All the thinking is done for you.

Allyson: Yes!

Jamie: All you have to do is move your finger and slide it over. I love it.

Allyson: Perfect. Me, too. I wish I had had this when I was an ED manager.

Jamie: Me, too.

Allyson: It's great. All right, I think ... Let's move onto workplace conditions. Amanda, you want to talk a little bit about what we learned there?

Amanda: Yeah, and I think I mentioned it a bit, Allyson. The idea is thinking, if you're a program leader, a coach, an ED manager, the director, thinking about, how do you create the supports around the classroom that really allow the educators to kind of sustain and continue this high-quality practice? You've got to ... It's a culture. Staff feels supported. They're part of a team. When something goes wrong, it's not about blame and punishment. It's about figuring out, "Hey, what happened? What contributed? What could we try that might ... It might fail again, but let's try doing this differently. How will we know when we're successful?" Having those kinds of conversations rather than, you know, again, this idea, people are trying to get away with things, and you've got to be on top of them. It's much more inclusive. They're encouraged to share their thoughts and ideas.

Shockingly, we know from research, most people want to do more than their organizations really allow them to do, so it's just reorienting ourselves a little bit, thinking about making time for self-reflection. To me, the highest kind of possible outcome of coaching and any kind of professional development is the ability to accurately self-observe and reflect and make changes. Doing it, everybody needs help to do this, but the more you practice it for yourself, the easier it gets, and the more effective you are at doing it yourself, so really supporting people to do that and then implementing some of the things that can be hard to do, but programs at some point may need to make choices about group sizes, teacher-child ratios, staff capacity, and again, there's different ways to do it. Some programs are really successful, for example, with having ... This is not a good time for this conversation, but, you know, are adding an additional adult. That isn't always possible. I know everyone out there is saying, "It's COVID! You can't even have anybody!" So, this is ... Some of these things are for the future, and other things are, again, how do you engage the people who are working with the child to really support those quality interactions? So, I would just say, that's the way to think of it. Think of each classroom as kind of an ecosystem, and what are the supports it takes to feed and nurture it and keep it going?

Allyson: So important, I mean, and I'll ... This next slide has really my favorite quote from this series that we heard, but it was more than this one quote. We heard this time and time again that really, just as Dr. B so eloquently sort of kicked us off today, it's really thinking about how as a site leader, you set up the conditions in which teachers can feel supported and be effective in their interactions with children, and I think now that is just more important than ever with what teachers are juggling, with really what we're all juggling right now, even those of us on this call who are managing childcare and being on a webinar and all of these things. Just having somebody who's in your corner to support you, and that might mean making your EAP resources or mental health services in the community available to teachers so that they can feel well and balanced, so that they can, in turn, be there for children and families is really so

important right now. It's like we all heard when we used to fly on the plane, right? Put your own oxygen mask on first before you try to help someone else, and for me, that really is what is at the heart of being a site leader.

Jamie: I agree. That quote, for me, just reminded me about leadership at all levels as being so important as we've talked about, and lots of these programs shared their need for strong leadership and to focus on systems to ensure that. So, having an agency-wide understanding, support for staff, buy-in for effective interactions measured by CLASS, so those included the training which we talked about, having a strong and reliable observation system that's in-house so that staff felt supported before, during and after. You know, as we know, there can be a lot of anxiety around getting observed whether it's CLASS-related or not, that has a score attached it. And so, we heard from some of the programs that they had made a commitment to their staff that they would, you know, give their feedback within 24 to 48 hours after their observation, so it felt like it was a little less like you were sweating it out. But I think the ongoing feedback, so the more that staff get feedback not just around, you know, an observation, they get used to that, and they look forward to it. I know I looked forward to getting some feedback and finding areas that I've done well and some of the areas that I know I need some support in.

Allyson: So, so true, and then one last thing that I thought was really important was that each of these programs really had somebody, whether it was on-staff or somebody they hired, who really ... This was their job, right? They held the work, so they found time to help maintain a focus on highly effective interactions even as staff across the program were juggling the multiple priorities that we know they do. That someone held it, made it a priority and kept bringing that to the forefront was so important for folks.

So, now as we end our time together, I just want to share one really great resource which after we heard from all these programs, we consolidated all of our best resources on one page here on the ECLKC. A lot of these, I will say, are heavily skewed towards instructional-support resources because that was really the focus of our calls, but you can use these resources to really address effective interactions across all of the domains. So, this page as well as on this page some animated – like an animated case study to really give a specific example of how to use them can be super helpful to you in the coming year, and then I'll make a final plug for MyPeers, of course, as a great place to share ideas, learn from your peers and offer your own ideas. And with that, we are out of time. I knew it would fly by. I want to thank Amanda, Jamie, and Lindsey for joining me today and offering some interesting advice to programs and things that we learned, and I want to wish all of you a great year and highly effective interactions. So, thanks, everyone, for joining us, and we'll see you next time.

Jamie: Thanks, everyone.

Allyson: Oh, thank you. Bye!